information is being collected from States/Union Territories and will be laid on the Table of the House as soon as the information is made available.

Environmental degradation of Gomukh

3099. SHRl EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Gomukh, the source of Ganga, teeters on the verge of ecological disaster due to insensitive visitors, greedy locals and an indifferent State Government;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Bhojwasa, 5 Kilometre from Gomukh has lost the tree that gave its name, as the locals use the bhoj timber as fuel, despite a Government ban, and trekkers use its branches as walking sticks; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to save Gomukh from environmental degradation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) There has been mainfold increase in the number of visitors, both tourists and pilgrims specially 'Kanwarias' to Gomukh which has definitely caused stress to the ecology and environment of the area. However, State Government is seized of the problem and proper checks are applied to control any unregulated activity in the area.

(b) Bhojwasa derives its name from the tree Bhoj' (Betula species) which is adequately represented in the area. The Bhoj tree has been included in the list of prohibited species for felling. Legal action is taken against any individual found to be involved in felfing or otherwise causing damage to 'Bhoj' trees under the relevant Acts/rules. Rampant use of 'Bhoj' branches for fuel or as walking sticks has not come to notice.

(c) To discourage unregulated traffic to Gomukh by tourists and pilgrims, Forest Department has established a check post at Kankhu where departments personnel check and regulate the traffic of pedestrians. A Committee has been formed to protect the Gomukh area. 'Gomukh Paryavaran Samiti' and Forest Department personnel also check and control the cases of pollution by visitors.